

Appl. No. 10/569,559
Amdt. dated 6 April 2009
Reply to Office Action of 5 January 2009

Amendments to the Drawings

Drawing sheet 4 of 4 has been amended to overcome the objection to Fig. 5A. Replacement sheet 4/4 is provided with this Amendment and Response.

REMARKS

This Amendment and Response is filed responsive to the Office Action dated 5 January 2009. In the Office Action, Claim 8 was allowed and Claims 1-7 were rejected. Additionally, the Office Action commented on the Information Disclosure Statement filed on 27 February 2006, objected to the Drawings for two reasons, objected to the Abstract, and objected to Claims 1-8 for informalities. Applicants appreciate the Examiner's efforts and thoroughness in reviewing this application. By way of this Amendment and Response, Applicants amend Claims 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8, cancel Claim 3, and add new Claims 9-25. Additionally, Applicants address each of the issues raised in the Office Action. Specifically, Applicants provide below: 1) comments regarding the IDS of 27 February 2006; 2) comments regarding the amendments to the Drawings and the corresponding amendments to the Specification; 3) comments regarding the amended Abstract; 4) comments regarding the amendments to Claims 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8 that are made to correct informalities; and 5) comments regarding the cited references and the reasons for which Applicants respectfully submit that the presently amended claims distinguish from the applied reference. In light of this Amendment and Response, Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance and respectfully request reconsideration of the application in combination with this Amendment and Response.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Office Action indicated that Documents 13 and 14 of the 27 February 2006 IDS were not considered because publication dates were not provided. Applicants respectfully submit that Documents 13 and 14 were properly listed in the IDS in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §1.98. Applicants note that §1.98 provides rules for the content of an IDS that discloses various types of information. Specifically, §1.98 delineates content requirements for patents, publications, applications, or other information. Applicants note that publication dates are required for submission of documents/information that has been published. However, Applicants also note that a publication date is not required for the proper listing of all document/information types. For example, §1.98(b)(3) states that "each [unpublished] U.S. application listed in an information disclosure statement must be identified by the inventor, application number, and filing date." Applicants further note that §1.98 does not specifically indicate the manner in which "other information" should be listed on the IDS, but does require that legible copies be submitted for

“all other information” (see §1.98(a)(2)(iv)).

Applicants respectfully submit that Documents 13 and 14 of the 27 February 2006 IDS are properly categorized as “other information” as they have not been published according to any conventional publication means. Specifically, Document 13 is a Search Report prepared by the European Patent Office and provided to the Applicants; Document 14 is self-explanatory as the ISR and Written Opinion of a corresponding PCT patent application. Applicants have provided copies of these “other information” documents as required by §1.98(a)(2)(iv). The relevance of these documents should be readily understood as they are patentability search reports prepared by other Offices on the same or related claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the IDS submission of 27 February 2006 was correct and that Documents 13 and 14 were properly identified therein. Applicants respectfully request that Documents 13 and 14 be considered by the Examiner.

Amendments to the Drawings

The Office Action objected to Figure 5A for depicting two embodiments. The Office Action further objected to the drawings generally for failing to illustrate the features of Claim 3. Initially, Applicants note that Claim 3 has been cancelled rendering the second objection to the drawings moot. With respect to the objection to Figure 5A, Applicants have amended both Figure 5A and Figure 5B to overcome the objection. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to Figures 5A and 5B are supported by the application as originally filed, particularly by paragraph [0027] as originally filed. Applicant notes that paragraph [0027] has been amended in this Amendment and Response to correspond to the amendments of Figures 5A and 5B. While paragraph [0027] was amended to correspond to the drawings, Applicants respectfully submit that the changes to both the specification and the drawings are supported by the application as filed. As seen in the attached Replacement Sheet, Figure 5A now depicts merely one embodiment, overcoming the objection of the Office Action. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection.

Amendments to the Abstract

The Office Action further objected to the Abstract for describing the application and invention as related to methods and for including the phrase “is provided.” Moreover, the Title

of the application was objected to for 'erroneously describ[ing] the claimed invention as including methods.' In light of the amendments presented herein, Applicants respectfully submit that these objections have been overcome. Specifically, the Abstract has been amended to remove the phrase "is provided." Additionally, the Claims have been amended to recite method claims rendering the reference to methods in the Abstract and the Title appropriate. Applicants respectfully submit that the new method claims are supported by the originally filed application. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection to the Specification, including the objections to the Abstract and to the Title.

Amendments to Correct Informalities

The Office Action objected to Claims 1-8 for various informalities related primarily to punctuation. Specifically, the Office Action objected to Claims 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8, each of which has been amended herein to correct the informalities identified by the Examiner. Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thoroughness in review of this application.

Remarks Regarding Claim Rejections

The Office Action rejected Claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 112. Applicants respectfully disagree with the assertions of the Office Action in this regard. However, in the interest of advancing the prosecution of the present application, Applicants have elected to cancel Claim 3. Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of this rejection.

The Office Action further rejected Claims 1-2 and 4-7 under §102(b) in view of Sell (US 5,655,794). Applicants appreciate the thoroughness with which the Examiner addressed each claim specifically. Applicants respectfully submit that the independent claims, Claims 1, 6, and 7, are distinguishable and patentable over the Sell reference as written. The remarks below will illustrate the differences between Sell and the present claims.

In contrast to the claimed subject matter, Sell describes a connector for disconnecting and reconnecting a bundled pneumatic supply and signal line. *See* Sell, col. 1, lines 62-66. In Sell, the connection sleeve (10) is adapted to couple two tubing end terminals (6), referred to herein as left terminal 6 and right terminal 6 as illustrated in Fig. 4 of Sell. The left and right terminals 6 are identical in configuration for interchangeability in operation (e.g., so as to enable a single component to be installed on either the left or the right side of the connection). However, as

illustrated in Sell's Fig. 4, the left tubing end terminal 6 is merely disposed within the connection sleeve 10 and held in place (or prevented from passing to the left) by the sleeve shoulder 17. The sleeve further has threads 16 used to engage right tubing end terminal 6, and particularly to couple to the right tubing end terminal 6 by engaging the threads 20 of the right terminal. *See id.* at Figs. 2-4; col. 2, lines 61-67. Stated otherwise, the left terminal 6 is engaged by the interaction between the terminal shoulder 18 and the sleeve shoulder 17; the right terminal 6 is engaged by the interaction between the sleeve threads 16 and the terminal sleeves 20.

The Office Action asserted that Sell's terminals are analogous to the recited component connection ends and that Sell's sleeve is analogous to the recited connection collar. However, it can be seen that the Sell reference does not provide a sleeve (connection collar) that is threaded onto the threads of both tubing end terminals 6 (component connection ends). Indeed, the threads of the left tubing end terminal 6 are not utilized to engage the sleeve 10. Rather, the threads 20 of left terminal 6 are merely present because the terminals are intended to function whether disposed on the left or right side of the connection illustrated in Fig. 4. As such, Sell does not provide or teach the claimed subject matter of independent Claim 1. Applicants note that independent Claims 6 and 7 each include recitations similar to Claim 1 reciting that the connection collar is adapted to be threaded onto both the first component connection end and the second component connection end. Additionally, Applicants note that dependent claims 2, 4, and 5 each depend from Claim 1 and are patentable for at least the reasons provided above for Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1, 2, and 4-7 are patentable over Sell and request withdrawal of the rejections.

With regard to new claims 9-25, these claims are directed to certain additional embodiments disclosed in the present application. As an example, claims 9-16 include recitations of a system, which are similar to claims 1-8 and clearly supported by the specification. *See e.g.* Application; Figs. 1-5B; pages 9-12. Claims 17-25 include recitations of a method, which are also similar to claims 1-8. These claims are again clearly supported in the specification and figures 1-11. *See id.* Accordingly, the new claims are clearly supported by the specification and figures. In addition, these new claims satisfy the requirements of §102 and §103 for at least the reasons provided above in the discussion of claim 1, 2 and 4-7. As such, Applicants respectfully request that the Office enter the proposed new claims and provide

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positive treatment thereof.

In this Amendment and Response, Applicant has addressed each and all of the issues raised in the Office Action. Applicant respectfully submits that each of the objections and rejections has been rendered moot and/or overcome by the foregoing amendments and remarks. Accordingly, Applicant believes that this application is in condition for allowance. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance covering the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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